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Idaho second state to implement Code.org CS education policies

BOISE, Idaho (Oct. 30, 2018) — Idaho is the second state in the U.S. to implement all nine of Code.org’s policies to help move computer science forward. Arkansas, the only other such state, fulfilled all the recommendations in the spring of 2017, according to Code.org, a nonprofit dedicated to expanding access to computer science and increasing participation by women and underrepresented minorities.

“Computer science is critical for every student, and Idaho continues to lead the way in making computing and STEM education opportunities available in our state’s K-through-career education system,” Idaho Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter said. “Nationwide, only 4 out of 10 schools teach it, and I take great pride in the fact that within two years every single high school in our great state will offer students at least one computer science course.”

Gov. Otter said the milestone was reached via a collaborative effort between the Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA), the Idaho Technology Council, the Idaho STEM Action Center, the Governor’s higher education and workforce development task forces, the Micron Foundation, Idaho National Laboratory, the Idaho State Department of Education, the Idaho State Board of Education, the Idaho Division of Career and Technical Education, and K-12 schools, universities and community colleges, out-of-school organizations, education associations, and industry statewide.

“By working together, all of these agencies have been able to make huge progress that will help Idaho fill jobs that are open now and future jobs we may not even know about,” Dr. Sherawn Reberry, IDLA’s director of education programs, said. “Through our collective efforts we’re keeping students in the pipeline regardless of their backgrounds. Whether they live in urban or rural areas and whether they’re in elementary school or middle school or high school, we’re creating pathways to ensure they keep on that trajectory and can study and pursue careers in computer science.”

Alexis Harrigan, Code.org’s director of state government affairs, concurs. “This is an impressive milestone and shows what can be achieved when teachers, students, legislators, and community members work collaboratively toward the expansion of computer science education,” she posted in a [blog](#) last week. “Idaho’s vision for CS includes all high schools offering a computer science course by 2020, and all middle and elementary schools offering one by 2022.”

Idaho Technology Council founder and CEO Jay Larsen said the state's partnership with Code.org is transformative, fostering a knowledge-based economy that compels companies to move here and disrupt technology around the globe.

“We still have a long way to go, but these kinds of initiatives accelerate the integration of technology and computer science into our schools' curriculum,” Larsen said. “Ultimately we want to require all students who graduate from Idaho high schools to complete an introductory CS class just like other core courses, and that wouldn't even be conceivable without implementing the nine steps of Code.org's process.”

Code.org's nine policies to make computer science fundamental to K-12 education are:

1. Create a state plan for K-12 computer science
2. Define computer science and establish rigorous K-12 computer science standards
3. Allocate funding for rigorous computer science teacher professional learning and course support
4. Implement clear certification pathways for computer science teachers
5. Create programs at institutions of higher education to offer computer science to preservice teachers
6. Establish dedicated computer science positions in state and local education agencies
7. Require that all secondary schools offer computer science with appropriate implementation timelines
8. Allow computer science to satisfy a core graduation requirement
9. Allow computer science to satisfy an admission requirement at institutions of higher education

It reports Idaho currently has 1,532 open computing jobs — 3.3 times the average demand rate in the state. Filling the current jobs isn't the biggest challenge, either, because Dr. Angela Hemingway, executive director of the STEM Action Center, said computing careers are expected to grow 14 percent in Idaho by 2024.

“Computer science is one of the most in-demand college degrees,” Dr. Hemingway said. “Computing is used throughout many careers and CS careers are the number-one source of all new wages in the country. In fact, CS jobs account for more than half of all projected job growth in STEM fields. Here in Idaho the average salary for a computing occupation is \$72,497, which is significantly higher than the state's overall average salary of \$42,240.”

Larsen and Drs. Hemingway and Reberry emphasized Gov. Otter, Lt. Gov. Brad Little, and the Idaho Legislature were instrumental in implementing Code.org's nine recommendations by funding the STEM Action Center with \$2 million annually for CS initiatives and creating a role there to oversee it. The agency hired Finia Dinh in July 2016 to serve in that capacity as its computer science program manager.

According to Dinh, parents and principals alike are clamoring for more computer science education and funding. "Nationwide nine out of 10 parents want their child's school to teach computer science," Dinh said. "And two-thirds of Idaho school administrators surveyed by Google and Gallup think CS is just as or more important than required core classes. Unfortunately, many Idaho schools lack the funds to hire and train computer science teachers, but that also happens to be where the STEM Action Center can help, because we provide many professional development opportunities in CS and STEM."

Dr. Reberry said as the regional partner for Code.org, the Idaho Digital Learning Academy has trained 704 teachers in Idaho to date — 525 elementary school teachers, 123 middle school teachers, and 56 high school teachers.

Dinh said the STEM Action Center has also helped moved the needle in computer science through Code.org activities and a variety of other opportunities it funds and supports. Its interactions with educators leapt from 223 in fiscal year 2016 to 2,149 and 8,618 in FY2017 and 2018, respectively. Meanwhile, they agency's interactions with students climbed from 5,709 in fiscal year 2016 to 36,355 and 121,958 in FY2017 and FY2018, respectively.

Formal and informal educators in Idaho looking for additional computer science opportunities and trainings should visit STEM.idaho.gov and IdahoDigitalLearning.org for help.

About Code.org

Twin brothers Hadi and Ali Partovi launched Code.org in 2013 with a video promoting computer science that became #1 on YouTube for a day, and 15,000 schools reached out to them for help. Since then, the Seattle-based nonprofit has expanded from a bootstrapped staff of volunteers to a full organization supporting a worldwide movement that works to ensure quality computer science education is available to every child, not just a lucky few. Code.org provides the leading curriculum for K-12 computer science in the largest school districts in the United States and also organizes the annual Hour of Code campaign, which has engaged 10 percent of all students worldwide. Many generous donors, including Amazon, Facebook, Google, the Infosys Foundation, and Microsoft, support the group. Visit Code.org for more information.

About the Idaho STEM Action Center

The Idaho STEM Action Center was created in 2015 because Idaho citizens are not entering the STEM pipeline fast enough to meet current and future Idaho workforce needs. Its goals are to coordinate and facilitate implementation of STEM programs, align education and workforce needs, and increase awareness of STEM throughout Idaho. The organization is working with industry, government, educators, and students to develop new resources and support high-quality teacher professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce that ensures Idaho's continued economic prosperity. Visit STEM.Idaho.gov for more information.

About the Idaho Digital Learning Academy

The Idaho Legislature and educators throughout the state created the Idaho Digital Learning Academy in 2002. Recognized as a national leader in online virtual education, IDLA provides access, equity, and flexibility for students statewide according to its statutory authority and enables the state to meet its constitutional requirement to provide a uniform and thorough educational system. By creating Idaho Digital Learning, an online state school, the Idaho Legislature, school administrators, and school boards created a consolidation of 115 school districts with highly qualified teachers, online courses, virtual services, and eLearning expertise for the state in online virtual education policy, procedure, and implementation. Visit IdahoDigitalLearning.org for more information.

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